



Salton Sea Management Program

10-Year Plan Committee Meeting Summary

Held June 12, 2018 – Coachella

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Meeting in Brief

The 10-Year Committee is developing goals and objectives to guide implementation of the 10-Year plan.

The Committee discussed challenges and barriers to moving forward projects and meeting state acreage requirements for dust management and habitat. The primary delays are tied to easements, regulatory permitting, and managing water quality. The state is making efforts to streamline and address these barriers.

The state is beginning to plan for a project near the Whitewater River on the north end of the Salton Sea.

Imperial Irrigation District has a proactive dust control project underway and recently published its 2016 validated data and 2017 proactive dust control plan on its [website](#).

The California Department of Public Health has been undertaking a research project with active community involvement to monitor and study air quality in the area. The Department makes all data available on the Ivan web site and works closely with Comité Cívico del Valle.

[Click here](#) for link to meeting materials and presentations.

Action Items

7/1/18	All	Committee members can send comments on proposed goals and objectives to Michael Cohen or Gina Bartlett
7/13	Michael, Vivien, Kelly @ SDCWA, Phil R, Gina	Review draft goals and objectives
7/15	Heather Pert, CDFW	Provide fish and wildlife objectives
7/30	Michael, Vivien, Gina	Circulate revised goals and objectives
TBD	Bruce	Set deadline with IID to move to mediation if easement issues not yet resolved
	Janesse	Brief habitat conservation area on the North Sea project concept

MEETING SUMMARY

Goals and Objectives

Some stakeholders have requested an explicit set of SSMP goals and objectives given the scale of the program. Guiding statements, goals, and objectives are important for project design, resource allocation, project assessment, and adaptive management. With this in mind, Michael Cohen, Pacific Institute, compiled goals, objectives, and milestones via references from existing legislation, the Salton Sea Task Force, stipulated order, and various plans. The Committee reviewed and discussed this document and is crafting a set of goals and objectives for the 10-Year Plan, and a small group will develop a refined set.

Continue building off existing documents and directives.

- The group recommended adding a preamble that lists the references to all the requirements would prove helpful.
- The group discussed narrowing the geographic reference of “at and around the Salton Sea,” but ultimately decided to use the geographic reference in the Salton Sea Restoration Act.
- This could create foundation for the Water Board requirement for a plan by 2022

Refine existing goals to include ecological resources and surrounding communities.

- The group recommended adding ecological resources (instead of bird and fish habitat), and maybe to consider adding in “restoration.”

Objectives

- Align objectives and milestones by date
- Clarify that the Water Board acreage is additive
- Add an objective tied to public benefit and social impact, linking environmental justice, community outreach, and jobs
- Refine the air quality objective needs
- Add fish and wildlife objectives
- Add operations and maintenance objectives: funding operations and maintenance over the long term is necessary
- Clarify which agencies have a role in “ensure oversight by regulatory agencies”

Air Quality: Defining the objective for air quality, formally, is challenging because while the objective is attainment, achieving attainment from a scientific standpoint is very difficult. The region was not in attainment before the program began. There are a number of other sources that contribute to poor air quality, and other entities like the counties have to work toward attainment as well. This program is seeking to address air quality emissions at the Salton Sea. The air quality objective might be refined to “working toward attainment” or dust suppression is part of the milestone and should be an overarching objective for air quality. Managing and addressing differing management districts and requirements is also an objective.

Fish and Wildlife Objectives: The CDFW representative recommended having a broad objective on habitat for pupfish and other species, then creating more specific criteria tied in to Fish and Game Code 2940. The purpose of these objectives would be qualitative whereas project criteria would likely be quantitative.

Next Steps

By 7/1: Committee members can send comments to Michael Cohen or Gina Bartlett

By 7/15: Heather Pert, CDFW will provide input on the fish and wildlife objectives

By 7/20: Michael, Gina, Vivien will craft draft goals and objectives to circulate to the small group for review

By 7/30: Finalize goals and objectives with committee

Project Implementation Challenges and Constraints

A [summary implementation table](#) captured a snapshot of existing acreage requirements and project status and existing challenges and constraints. The Committee requested at an earlier meeting to help tackle constraints and challenges to project implementation.

Easements

The Imperial Irrigation District and the State of California are continuing to work to resolve issues on easements. The primary reason that species conservation habitat is not starting construction is because of the lack of easements. Without the easements, projects on those lands cannot move forward. The parties report that these first easements should provide a foundation for future easements to move forward more quickly; however, deciding whether to tackle issues now, which can cause delay, versus grappling with issues later is a dilemma. One Committee member asked if mediation would be helpful and reminded the committee that some parties had offered to pay for mediation to support the resolution of outstanding issues. Bruce Wilcox committed to talking with IID about setting a deadline, at which time if the parties have not reached an agreement, the parties would try mediation. One committee member recommended creating a best practices document or some other type of guidance to streamline future processes recognizing that each project has unique attributes.

Regulatory Permits

The state is working on a nationwide permit that it might be able to use for a number of projects. The state is also moving forward with environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Army Corps staff have received funding so the State has a hook to keep the Corps on track and accountable with deadlines. The Palm Springs office works with the regulatory agencies. The USFWS has to respond to the Corps' requests.

Other agency staff report that they are committed to meeting the State's timelines. The best way for them to stay engaged and within deadlines is for the state staff to keep them abreast of the overarching goals and timelines in advance so they are ready to contribute and review documents when they receive them.

Water Quality

The Regional Water Quality Control Board is issuing water quality requirements for the Salton Sea so the Natural Resources Agency is going to interface with the Regional Board on this and also form a committee to work with the Regional Board on developing these standards. The state has water quality permits for the species conservation habitat.

Alcott Wetland

Someone asked about why the state is looking at wet areas to develop projects rather than already dry areas. The area has important [Ridgway's Rail](#) habitat and freshwater marsh and will be drying out in the next 5 years. The area also provides an opportunity for working with the geothermal companies. The initial cost estimates are \$5-8 million but how much the state will contribute is unclear since it is working with the geothermal companies. One person suggested that naturally occurring succession with cattails is coming in downstream so maybe that could provide the necessary habitat rather than building habitat at Alcott Wetland.

Operations and Maintenance

The Committee urges the state to begin identifying operations and maintenance costs and potential funding sources for this purpose. These costs are very expensive.

Feedback on Summary Table

The summary table is missing the early projects that are not included in the acreage for the stipulated order (Red Hill Bay, etc.).

Next Steps

Bruce Wilcox committed to setting a deadline with IID to go to mediation if easement issues are not resolved by that date.

Whitewater River / North Sea Project Development

Bill Brownlie, Tetra Tech consultant to the state, presented preliminary concepts on building a project in the northern part of the Sea. Tetra Tech has a task order to do a conceptual design, building off the design work that the County has already completed. The project would likely be 1000-2000 acres and involve two types of habitat, deeper in one area and saltier in another. The state would implement the project in phases.

The project is in the early stages so the Committee just discussed some design decisions and trade-offs. Feedback included:

- Salinity is not an issue for mosquitos. (The Science Committee will be providing a paper.) Fish help with mosquito abatement.
- Consult with the CVWD on flow amounts in the Whitewater River.
- Developing cost estimates for flows would be a key factor in the design.
- Recommend documenting community benefits early on in the project.
- Briefing the habitat conservation area is key. Janesse (USFWS) will reach out to inform staff at the conservation area.
- The USFWS and US EPA have different standards for selenium. The two agencies have different standards for fish tissue: the US EPA relies on 8.5 mg/kg and USFWS prefers 5.5 mg/kg. The project design question is whether to use drains given the selenium.
- Considering selenium levels in sediment is also important.

A big consideration is the cost of pumping water, and this also affects the level of salinity.

Next Steps

The project could be completed in early 2022.

Air Quality Presentations

Find [presentations at this link](#).

The Committee heard two informative presentations on air quality work underway. Jessica Lovecchio from the Imperial Irrigation District provided an overview of the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) environmental mitigation work. IID Salton Sea Air Quality Mitigation Program has 2016 validated data and the 2017 Proactive Dust Control Plan posted on its web site.

Dr. Paul English of the California Department of Public Health provided an overview of research and air quality monitoring that is occurring around the Salton Sea. The Department has partnered with Comité Cívico del Valle. Dr. English's presentation provides information on the monitoring program, the online data sharing program (Ivan, <https://ivan-imperial.org/air/map>), and research findings.

Discussion

The two air districts must coordinate methodologies. Regional air monitoring should help to comply with federal air monitoring requirements.

IID's program goal is to manage dust emission proactively so it doesn't trigger federal intervention.

The role of regulators is to protect the public. Either the responsible party pays for dust mitigation or ultimately taxpayers have to pay if or when the government assumes responsibility. Proactive, upfront mitigation is critical to protect human health. Many fail to account for the cost of health care to treat associated conditions.

Feedback on Meeting

- ✓ Do not want to divert resources or spend a lot of time on goals and objectives
- ✓ Would like more clarity on projections to meet milestones (i.e. when meeting; when not meeting, then what); clarify air quality acres; funding underway and funding needed
- ✓ Young people are active and would be terrific to engage in some way
- ✓ Challenges discussion – we aren't that successful in addressing the challenges
- ✓ Reminder to CBI and chairs to give context for whole structure at the beginning of the meeting

Contacts

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